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SHAKESPEARE'S TOMB AND MEMORIAL

# SHAKESPEARE-LAND

Described by **WALTER JERROLD**

Pictured by **E. W. HASLEHUST**



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## IN SHAKESPEARE'S TOWN

Others abide our question. Thou art free.  
We ask and ask—Thou smilest and art still,  
Out-topping knowledge. For the loftiest hill,  
Who to the stars uncrowns his majesty,  
Planting his steadfast footsteps in the sea,  
Making the heaven of heavens his dwelling-place,  
Spares but the cloudy border of his base  
To the foil'd searching of mortality;  
And thou, who didst the stars and sunbeams know,  
Self-school'd, self-scann'd, self-honour'd, self-secure,  
Didst tread on earth unguess'd at.—Better so!  
All pains the immortal spirit must endure,  
All weakness which impairs, all griefs which bow,  
Find their sole speech in that victorious brow.

—Matthew Arnold.

It is a happy circumstance that the small town which may be described as the heart of England should be set in such rich but homely scenery as

that of "leafy Warwickshire". It would not, perhaps, be easy to determine who first applied the epithet "leafy" to the county, but it is so happily descriptive, that one rarely thinks of the name of Warwickshire without the addition; and so, also, it is difficult to think of Stratford-upon-Avon without thinking of it as Shakespeare's Stratford. Citizens of the place may be able to think of it as a kind of town entity, but for others it is a background to one of the world's greatest men, to the supreme poet and dramatist whose genius commands the homage of the whole civilized world. It is a background full of beauty and of deep interest, a little conventionalized, maybe, from being a show-place. Few can be those people "with souls so dead", to use Sir Walter Scott's familiar phrase, as to be unmoved by wandering about spots associated with the greatly admired great.

The majority of visitors from afar reach Stratford-upon-Avon by railway, and the entries from the railway stations are perhaps those which give the least favourable first impression of the town. Especially is this the case with that from the Great Western Station, on the Alcester road, leaving which, we find ourselves in a broad road, with the large general Hospital on our left, then new red-brick villas, and then flat-fronted, low, unpicturesque houses and shops rising

from the footwalk. We have to pass along a road of strangely varying width, and might go right across the town from west to east—the one road having five names, Alcester Road, Greenhill Street, Wood Street, Bridge Street, and Bridge Foot—and come out on Clopton Bridge over the Avon without having any idea that we had passed through anything more than a quiet, comfortable market town of a kind not uncommon in the English Midlands.

A glance at the shop windows, with their innumerable picture-postcards and varied souvenirs, would have shown that the town was other than it seemed. A little way on our left we should have passed the central shrine of this centre of many shrines—the birthplace of William Shakespeare—while a glance to the right down the High Street, which branches off at the point where the narrowest part of our highway of Wood Street becomes the broad Bridge Street, would give glimpses of some more of the older buildings of the town. When our traveller, whom we have presumed to be ignorant of the significance of Stratford, came to Clopton Bridge, looking downstream he would see a striking building by the waterside—a building of red brick and white stone, a building of high-pitched green-slatted roof and many turrets and small gables. Such a building, in such a town, would surely pique our traveller's curiosity,

and he would find on enquiry that it is the Shakespeare Memorial. Beyond, farther along the river, he would see the spire of Stratford Church rising from amid trees—the church in which Shakespeare is buried—and he would surely wish at once to linger in and about the town that had at a first glance appeared to have little that was especially attractive.

Clopton Bridge itself may well detain us. It is a fine stone structure of many arches, with low parapets, over which we have delightful scenes up and down the course of the soft-flowing Avon, the windings of which give us but short views of the water, while the low-lying meadows are backed by the greenery of Warwickshire's ever-present trees. Looking downstream, towards the Memorial and Church, we see the old bridge is close-neighbourd by another one of red brick, built for carrying a disused railway, and said to be one of the earliest of our railway bridges, a fact which may lessen our impatience at its obstructing the view downstream, and also for obstructing our view of the fine old bridge when we look upstream from the playing-fields on the left bank of the Avon.

Here it may be said that an old-time Stratford clergyman derived the name of Avon from "a British word, *aufona*, with them signifying as much as *fluvius*



CLOPTON BRIDGE. STRATFORD-ON-AVON



with us". The river was spanned by an old wooden bridge, across which unsupported tradition says that Queen Matilda led her troops; but this was removed by one of Stratford's more notable citizens and replaced by the present stone bridge, iron plates on which record its building and its repairing and widening in the early part of last century. Until the widening there stood on it a stone pillar with the following sufficient story: "Sir Hugh Clopton, Knight, Lord Mayor of London, built this bridge at his own proper expense in the reign of King Henry ye Seventh".

To the Avon we shall return. Going eastward again by Bridge Foot and Bridge Street, that we may visit the shrine associated with the memory of one who is not only Stratford's, but England's most famous son, we pass up the wide Bridge Street, and find the way forks on either side of plain white, many-windowed bank premises. The left road is Wood Street, by which we came from the railway station. The right is Henley Street, a short thoroughfare, two-thirds of the way along which we reach a neat and very picturesque timbered and gabled house rising, as most of the houses do in these older Stratford ways, straight from the street. This is "The Birthplace". On either side of it is now garden ground, preserved open that the shrine may be less

liable to any danger from fire, from which the town thrice suffered severely during the lifetime of Shakespeare. On the last of these occasions—July, 1614—no fewer than fifty-four dwelling-houses were destroyed, so that it is no doubt largely to those fires we owe it that there are not more of the Tudor buildings standing. Fortunately, among those spared are those most interesting.

To gain admittance to the house the necessary ticket must be obtained at the cottage immediately to the east, the office of the Trustees and Guardians of Shakespeare's Birthplace. Though brick-fronted and much altered, this cottage was standing in the poet's time, his neighbours there resident being of the name of Horneby.

The Birthplace itself is one of the chief shrines of the town, a place annually visited by many thousands of people from all over the world. From its small rooms, its tiny irregular staircase, we may easily imagine how comfortable citizens lived in the spacious days of great Elizabeth; in the fine collection of documents and books, signatures, mementoes, and curios, we get glimpses more directly personal to Shakespeare himself, his family, and the people whom he knew. Upstairs we are in the very room in which, on April 23rd, 1564, the poet first saw the light. Here generations of visitors scrawled their

names, in accordance with a bad old habit to which Thomas Carlyle, Sir Walter Scott, and Charles Dickens fell victims. Now the autograph record of those who visit the house is duly kept in a visitors' book provided for the purpose.

It is not possible for anyone gifted with imagination to be in these rooms unmoved—rooms in which the poet was born, in which he passed what we may well believe was a happy childhood, from which he went to the Grammar School about a quarter of a mile off, and from which he went a-courting a mile across the fields to Shottery. Of intimate knowledge of Shakespeare's personality we may have but little, of the story of his life much may be surmise, but here, at least, we can feel that we see rooms much as he saw them, though in place of the simple furnishings of Tudor times we have in some of the rooms the *omnium gatherum* of a museum. It is a museum full of interest to the student of Shakespeareana, and tempts the visitor to linger over the sight of copies of books which the poet himself might have read, over his and other old signatures to legal documents, over the celebrated "Ely" portrait of Shakespeare, over pictures, plans, and other relics of bygone Stratford-upon-Avon.

Little as we know of the details of Shakespeare's life story, the history of his birthplace, from possessor

to possessor, is fortunately complete from the time of his birth up to the purchase of the house by the nation in 1847. It is true that there have not been wanting theorists who have sought to prove that his birth did not actually take place here, but circumstantial evidence strongly supports the belief that it did. Here his father, John Shakespeare, lived, and here carried on his business of wool stapler and glover. The immediate surroundings have changed with improving conditions, for in the sixteenth century the elder Shakespeare was fined for keeping a muck-heap outside his street door! Now Henley Street is a neat and pleasant thoroughfare, though modernity is marked by a motor garage a little to the west, and passing along the street on a Saturday evening I have noticed, if not an ancient, certainly a fish-like smell from a fried-fish shop nearly opposite the Birthplace, while from the end of Henley Street have come the strains of a Salvation Army hymn. Even in Stratford men cannot live on sentiment.

Passing out at the backdoor of the house, we are in a garden, the guardians of which have made it a peculiarly interesting one by planting in it representatives of all flowers and trees named by the poet in his works. Here, during a September visit, I have found "the pale primrose" in bloom, and here, earlier in the summer, are to be seen a beau-

tiful display of those "oldfashioned flowers" and herbs which flourish unfadingly in the words of Ophelia and of Perdita:

There's rosemary, that's for remembrance: pray you, love, remember: and there is pansies, that's for thoughts. . . . There's fennel for you and columbines: there's rue for you: and here's some for me: we may call it herb of grace o' Sundays: O, you must wear your rue with a difference. There's a daisy: I would give you some violets, but they withered all when my father died.

For you there's rosemary, and rue; these keep  
Seeming and savour all the winter long. . . .

Here's flowers for you;

Hot lavender, mints, savory, marjoram;  
The marigold that goes to bed wi' the sun,  
And with him rises weeping: . . . daffodils,  
That come before the swallow dares, and take  
The winds of March with beauty; violets dim,  
But sweeter than the lids of Juno's eyes,  
Or Cytherea's breath; pale primroses,  
That die unmarried ere they can behold  
Bright Phoebus in his strength, a malady  
Most incident to maids; bold oxlips, and  
The crown-imperial; lilies of all kinds,  
The flower-de-luce being one.

All these flowers of the poet's—flowers to which he has attached epithets now familiar as themselves—will be found in the neat little garden at the back of the Birthplace. Passing through it into Henley Street again, we retrace our way to the bank building, and thence, following the route which the schoolboy Shakespeare must have passed, sometimes perhaps—

with his satchel  
And shining morning face, creeping like snail  
Unwillingly to school—

we go into the short High Street, at the farther end of which we see projecting the simple ugliness of the Town Hall, and beyond the grand old Guild Chapel.

Before getting so far, however, there are places to arrest our attention. Just short of the Town Hall on our right—those with a sense of humour will in passing have observed smilingly the Shakespeare Restaurant, kept by one Bacon!—is a projecting timbered building worthy of more than a momentary glance. It is a beautiful specimen of a Tudor dwelling, with its richly carved timbers, its bulging upper floors. This is known as Harvard House, because it was the home of Katherine Rogers, the mother of John Harvard, founder of the famous Harvard College at Cambridge, Massachusetts. It is an interesting fact that as Shakespeare had gone, according to tradition, from Stratford to Southwark, so Katherine Rogers, his neighbour in Warwickshire, should have married a Southwark man. It suggests that there may have been some special reason for drawing the Stratfordians who went to London to the town at the southern end of London Bridge. This attractive old house, architecturally one of the gems of Strat-



W. H. H. H. H. H.

HIGH STREET, STRATFORD-ON-AVON



ford, has recently and most fittingly been converted into a rendezvous for the American visitors who form a goodly proportion of those who make the pilgrimage to Stratford. Picturesque outside, the interior, with its old-world furnishings, is also well worthy of inspection.

Nearly opposite to the Rogers-Harvard house is the undistinguished, not to say wholly unworthy, Town Hall, built a hundred and fifty years ago, and illustrating the beginning of one of the least pleasing periods in English architecture. On the northern end, facing up High Street, is the statue presented by David Garrick at the conclusion of the famous "Shakespeare Jubilee" of 1769. Within the Hall are some interesting pictures, including Gainsborough's portrait of Garrick.

Next door to the Town Hall is the Shakespeare Hotel, part of which is the "Five Gables", a picturesque timbered building, the lower portion of which consists of shops. The rooms in this hotel have long been notable as being named, frequently with peculiar felicity, after Shakespeare's plays. Thus the bar-parlour is "Measure for Measure", the coffee-room is "As You Like It", and so on.

With that lavishness in the naming of streets which cannot fail to strike a visitor, we find that High Street ended at the Town Hall, and already

we are in Chapel Street, with the handsome stone tower of the old Guild Chapel a short way ahead. A little beyond the "Five Gables", and also on the left, at the corner of Chapel Street and Chapel Lane, we reach the site of "New Place", the house which Shakespeare purchased in his prosperity, and in which he died on April 23rd, 1616. The house passed immediately before reaching it, New Place Museum, is known as Nash's House from having been the home of the first husband of Shakespeare's granddaughter, Elizabeth Hall—Thomas Nash, who is not to be confounded with the Elizabethan writer of the same name.

The site of the house and the garden are fenced from the road by a low wall, surmounted by an ornate iron railing, in the decoration of which the initials "W. S." and the poet's and town arms are included. The railings are somewhat uglified by being picked out with gilding. A little way down Chapel Lane, at the foot of which is the Memorial, is the entrance to the pleasant and well-kept garden attached to New Place. Here a mulberry stump is described as scion of that tree long associated with Shakespeare. Here are to be seen a pillar from the ancient Town Hall, a sculpture from before the old Shakespeare Gallery in Pall Mall, and a large stone on which are engraved verses in honour of the poet

by Richard Jago. The mulberry tree planted by the poet attracted so much attention on the part of visitors when interest in Shakespeare awakened in the eighteenth century, that the un-Reverend Mr. Gastrell, who then owned New Place, "damned himself to everlasting fame" by cutting it down; and he carried his despicable vandalism further still when, a few years later, in consequence of a quarrel with the Corporation in the matter of rates, he had New Place demolished, after which he fittingly retired altogether from the town of Stratford. The mulberry tree was acquired by a local tradesman, who made of it many mementoes for Shakespeare lovers—indeed, he is accused of having made far more souvenirs than the genuine timber could have supplied. Drinking at the great Festival from a cup made of the famous tree, Garrick sang his own words:

Behold this fair goblet, 'twas carved from the tree  
Which, O my sweet Shakespeare, was planted by thee;  
As a relic I kiss it, and bow at the shrine,  
What comes from thy hand must be ever divine.

All shall yield to the mulberry tree,  
Bend to thee,  
Blest mulberry;  
Matchless was he  
Who planted thee;  
And thou, like him, immortal be!

Of Gastrell an indignant writer said many years ago: "The rabid old gentleman who destroyed Shake-

speare's mulberry tree, and in an impotent fit of bilious rage pulled the poet's last abode to the ground, quitted Stratford amidst the general execration of its inhabitants. This wild mischief could only have been the work of eccentricity on the very verge of madness. We pity the poor wretch capable of an act so unfeeling and senseless; for though it was, we know, the constant visible presence of the Deity which hallowed the bulwarks of Sion, and fortified her walls with salvation, ten thousand vivid recollections sanctify the deserted dwellings of the truly great, endear their earthly abodes, and hallow their relics to the hearts and imaginations of posterity."

New Place, which had been originally built by Sir Hugh Clopton in the time of Henry the Seventh, was purchased, altered, and given its lasting fame by William Shakespeare in 1597. Before becoming the property of Mr. Gastrell, of infamous memory, it had returned to the possession of the Clopton family, and under the famous mulberry another Sir Hugh entertained Garrick, Macklin, and other notables in 1742.

When Shakespeare's daughter, Susannah Hall, was still living at New Place—she died there in 1649—there came the troubles of the Civil War, and hither Queen Henrietta Maria came on her way to join Charles the First at Oxford in 1643, and she

made her stay at New Place, as being presumably the chief residence in the town. Prince Rupert, too, was here, and for a time the quiet town was a centre of military activity, with about 5000 troops quartered in it. A year earlier the town must have been in a fine flutter of excitement, with the Battle of Edgehill taking place less than a dozen miles away. One historian says: "At this period the Queen took up her abode for about three weeks at New Place, Stratford, while Mrs. Shakespeare resided there." The writer was evidently confusing the poet's wife and his daughter, for Mrs. Shakespeare had died twenty years before. Stratford did not go scathless in these troubled times, for one arch of the Clopton Bridge was destroyed, and the old Town Hall was blown up—a pillar from it, as has been said, is to be seen in the New Place garden.

Divided by the width of a turning from the site of New Place is the beautiful old Guild Chapel of the Holy Cross, and immediately beyond it is a long range of fine timbered buildings, comprising the Guild Hall, the Grammar School, and almshouses for twenty-four old people. Somewhat plain inside, its ancient mural paintings obliterated, it is as a fine specimen of fifteenth-century architecture that the old Chapel claims attention. From its tower at morning and evening during the winter is still heard the clanging

of the curfew bell. Here it is supposed that Shakespeare attended public worship, as there used to be a pew in the Chapel attached to New Place.

This connection of the house with the Chapel possibly dated from the time when Sir Hugh Clopton resided there, as he was a great benefactor to the edifice, rebuilding the nave and tower. On the south side of the Chapel is the entrance to the old half-timbered Guild Hall and Grammar School—the latter being above the former. This building is supposed to have been erected about the end of the thirteenth century by Robert de Stratford, presumably for the use of the brethren of the Holy Cross. Shakespeare associations are everywhere about us. In the great schoolroom, with open timbered roof, he is supposed to have received his education; in the Guild Hall below, it has been suggested, he may have been present when companies of stage players are known to have given their performances during the time that his father was Bailiff of the town. In the pleasant enclosure at the back of the Guild Hall we see another timbered building, known as the Pedagogue's House. With these old buildings on either hand, and the ancient Chapel in front of us, we have the corner of Stratford that is perhaps least changed of all since Shakespeare's time, a true *coup d'œil* of Tudor England.



THE GRAMMAR SCHOOL AND GUILD CHAPEL, STRATFORD-ON-AVON



That Stratford Grammar School—formed certainly as early as 1424, and re-established by Edward the Sixth in 1553—was an educational centre of some importance in the time when Shakespeare was a boy, may be gathered from the fact that the headmaster was allowed “wages” of twenty pounds a year, a circumstance which made it likely that the best men available were sure to be obtained for the post, seeing that the ordinary headmaster of the time—as at Eton—had only ten pounds. This being so, it is likely that the poet’s education was probably a better one than early theorizers about his life were inclined to think. An inscription marks the place at which what is supposed to have been Shakespeare’s desk stood; and it has been suggested that if—as that snapper-up of unconsidered biographical trifles, John Aubrey, records—Shakespeare was for a time a schoolmaster, it may have been here in the school in which he had been educated. It is a pleasant conjecture, but nothing more. The desk is now at the Birthplace.

Next to the Guild Hall comes a similar but somewhat lower range of half-timbered, red-tiled buildings, the Guild Almshouses, for twelve old men and twelve old women—almshouses which are described as being among the oldest and most interesting in England. The fronts of these picturesque

fifteenth-century dwellings were long plastered over; but the care with which Stratford guards its many ancient relics has been extended to them, and the fine timber framing has been newly and properly made plain. Continuing south—the street has become Church Street from when we left New Place—we soon turn downwards to the left into what is known as Old Town, where Dr. Hall, the poet's son-in-law, lived, and so reach the second of the chief Shakespearean shrines of Shakespeare's town—the church in which he is buried.

Holy Trinity Church, Stratford-upon-Avon, is probably one of the most widely known, by pictorial representation, as it is assuredly one of the most beautiful of our churches. Its tall spire, rising amid trees, as viewed from the meadows on the farther bank of Avon, has been represented in many paintings and in photographs without number. As we approach it from the town it is perhaps less impressive than as seen, in its cathedral-like proportions, from the left bank of the river. The approach from the road is by a short avenue of limes—"a sedate and pleasing shade". Old elms that stood near the porch were cut down in 1871, and their wood was turned into mementoes, as that of "Shakespeare's Mulberry Tree" had been more than a hundred years earlier.

If Stratford Church were not the burial-place of Shakespeare, it would be worthy of a visit as one of the most beautiful, as it is probably in part one of the most venerable of Midland churches. There was a church here when "Domesday Book" was compiled, but no vestige of that earlier structure remains. Sufficient antiquity is, however, claimed for Holy Trinity, for the tower is supposed to have been erected shortly after the Conquest, and the rest of the fine cruciform edifice to have been built during the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. Though there are many monuments of interest in the church—notably to members of the ancient Clopton family—it is in its memorials of Shakespeare and his kindred that it is attractive to the great majority of visitors, for the son of the sixteenth-century Bailiff of Stratford has become the town's focal centre, so that its old benefactor and his family are of comparatively small interest. But of Sir Hugh Clopton, who built the beautiful bridge across the Avon and who owned the "Great House" (later the New Place of Shakespeare), only conjecture can point to his resting-place, and even so it is but few who trouble to enquire as to the good knight's resting-place. It is Shakespeare's grave and monument, and the graves of his people, in which most visitors to the church are interested. These will be found at the

eastern end of the beautiful chancel. On the north wall there, near the altar, is the famous half-length figure of Shakespeare himself, with quill in hand, as in the act of writing. It is set, as it were, in an entablature with the poet's arms and crest above, flanked by a couple of boyish figures. This monument, the work of Gerard Johnson, was erected some time between the poet's burial in 1616 and the issue of the First Folio edition of his work in 1623, as we learn from a reference made to it in the latter year. From the fact that it was erected soon after his death—and there can be little doubt by members of his family—it may well be accepted as giving us the likeness of Shakespeare nearest to him in the habit as he lived. The figure was coloured, and in 1748 John Ward, grandfather of the Kembles, had the tomb repainted and repaired from the profits of his company's performance of "Othello" at Stratford, thus giving, as it were, a posthumous "benefit" to the great poet. In 1793 Edmund Malone obtained permission to paint the bust white, and white it remained until 1861, when the whitewash was removed, and the old colours, as far as they were traceable, restored. Fortunately an old historian of Stratford had described its original appearance: "The eyes were of a light hazel colour, and the hair and beard auburn. The dress consisted of a scarlet

doublet, over which was thrown a loose black gown without sleeves. The upper part of the cushion was of a green colour, and the lower of a green colour, with gilt tassels." Beneath the effigy of the poet is the following inscription:—

IVDICIO PYLIVM, GENIO SOCRATEM, ARTE  
MARONEM, TERRA TEGIT, POPVLVS MÆRET,  
OLYMPVS HABET.

Stay Passenger, why goest thou by so fast?  
Read, if thou canst, whom envious Death hath plast,  
Within this monument; Shakespeare with whome  
Quick Nature dide; whose name doth deck ys Tombe  
Far more then cost; sith all yt he hath writt,  
Leaves living art but page to serve his witt.

OBIIT. ANO. DOI. 1616  
ÆTATIS 53. DIE 23 AP.

Within the chancel rail is the actual grave of the poet, under a stone inscribed with the famous lines traditionally said to have been penned by Shakespeare himself to prevent the removal of his remains to the charnel house, which was long attached to the church, and contained a vast collection of human fragments. This charnel house was only taken down in 1800. It is also said that to prevent the likelihood of anyone's risking the curse, the grave was dug seventeen feet deep. The lines run:

GOOD FREND FOR IESVS SAKE FORBEARE,  
TO DIGG THE DVST ENCLOASED HEARE:  
BLESTE BE YE MAN YT SPARES THES STONES,  
AND CVRST BE HE YT MOVES MY BONES.

It was not until 1694 that these lines were said to have been written by Shakespeare himself. The tradition, it may be surmised, arose from the use of the words "my bones", for it is not easy to believe that the great poet really did write such doggerel. It may well be that he had expressed horror of the custom, in accordance with which graves were re-dug, and the bones of their old occupants removed to the charnel house to make room for new tenants, and that his family had his wishes put into the lasting form, in which they are now familiar. Between Shakespeare's grave and the north wall, on which is the monument, is the gravestone of his wife, on which their son-in-law, Dr. Hall, is supposed to have written the Latin memorial lines that follow the inscription: "Here lyeth interred the bodye of Anne, wife of Mr. William Shakespeare, who depected this life the 6th day of August 1623, being of the age of 67 yeares". On the other side of Shakespeare's grave are the graves of Susannah Hall (1649), of her husband Dr. John Hall (1635), and of their son-in-law (1647). The inscription placed on Susannah Hall's gravestone is worthy of quotation, because it suggests that, "witty above her sex", she may have inherited some of her great father's qualities, and also because it has been thought that possibly the lines may have been written by her daughter



HOLY TRINITY CHURCH, STRATFORD-ON-AVON



Elizabeth (later Lady Barnard), the last of Shakespeare's direct descendants:

HEERE LYETH YE BODY OF SVSANNA WIFE TO  
JOHN HALL, GENT, YE DAUGHTER OF WILLIAM  
SHAKESPEARE, GENT: SHEE DECEASED YE 11TH  
DAY OF JVLY, A<sup>d</sup> 1649, AGED 66.

Witty above her sexe, but that's not all,  
Wise to Salvation was good Mistress Hall,  
Something of Shakespere was in that, but this  
Wholy of him with whom she's now in blisse.

Then, Passenger, ha'st ne're a teare,  
To weepe with her that wept with all?

That wept, yet set herself to chere

Them up with comforts cordiall.

Her love shall live, her mercy spread,  
When thou ha'st ne're a teare to shed.

The tomb of John Combe is worthy of note, for it is to one who was a friend of Shakespeare's, and one who left the poet four pounds by his will—a bequest which would have been but poorly requited if it were true that Shakespeare wrote for Combe this satirical epitaph:

Ten in the hundred lies here ingrav'd,  
'Tis a hundred to ten his soul is not saved;  
If any man ask who lies in this tomb,  
Oh! oh! quoth the devil 't is my John-a-Combe.

Combe, who lived at Stratford College—an old place that stood until the close of the seventeenth century near the church—is reputed to have been a usurer; but the tradition which fathers this pos-

thumous gibe at him on Shakespeare is without authority, and is certainly without any of the support that may be gathered from internal evidence.

The spire of Stratford Church, which is a notable feature as we look towards the town from many parts of the surrounding country, is not the spire which met Shakespeare's eyes on his annual return to his birthplace from London, for originally it was much lower than at present. The old lead-covered wooden spire was taken down in 1763, and the present graceful one of stone erected on the tower in its stead. The height of the top of the spire is 163 feet from the ground.

Passing through the graveyard, we find the River Avon flows along its eastern border under fine trees. Up towards the Memorial, and down towards the mill just below we have beautiful glimpses of the beautiful river, with osiered aits by the weir, and on the farther side the old disused lock—once part of the arrangement which made the river navigable from Stratford to its junction with the Severn. Whether seen here from the graveyard, or from the recreation ground opposite, this reach of the stream from the church to the mill bridge is full of quiet beauty. From the deserted lock on the left bank, standing watching numerous tits performing their acrobatic feats up and down the willow wands on the ait, I

have seen the kingfisher but a few yards from me on the remaining battered lock-gate suddenly flash, a living turquoise, as it were, and pass downstream but a few feet above the surface of the water.

Leaving the church, where Shakespeare was laid to rest close upon three hundred years ago, we may make for the building which stands apart from those places with which we may reasonably suppose he was personally associated, as a tribute erected at once to his memory as a man, and to his undying fame as a poetic genius. We find it, as we saw from Clifton Bridge on the other side of it, by the banks of the stream along which Shakespeare must many times have strolled. The large, somewhat eccentric architectural medley, as it may seem on a first glance, will be found on a visit to fulfil in admirable fashion the various purposes it was designed to serve. Here will be found housed a fine library of Shakespeareana, an art gallery of pictures and sculpture for the most part associated with Shakespeare, and a beautiful theatre in which each spring are presented some of the plays which Shakespeare wrote.

The Memorial, as it finally took shape—something of the sort had been proposed half a century earlier—owed its conception to the munificent zeal of Mr. Charles E. Flower, who in 1875 presented the site for the building, and started the necessary fund in

a liberal fashion. On Shakespeare's birthday, April 23, 1877, the first stone was laid, and exactly two years later the theatre was opened, when Helen Faucit (Lady Theodore Martin) took part in a performance of *Much Ado About Nothing*. Since then each year the latter end of April has been marked by representations of Shakespeare's plays in Shakespeare's own town, and it is a beautiful theatre that has been provided for the purpose—one capable of seating nine hundred persons. Of the many pictures old and new, and of the ever-growing Shakespearean library, it is not necessary here to speak. No visitor to the Memorial, however, should fail to climb the tower for the purpose of obtaining the beautiful view of the winding Avon with its bordering meadows, of the church, and near at hand of the roofs of the town itself. Hence to the south a mile away is the leafy hillside, where the river flows at the foot of the Weir Brake; a mile away to the east lies the village of Shottery, and all around the distance is filled in with the wooded hills of leafy Warwickshire.

On the north side of the Memorial, fronting the riverside grounds, stands the beautiful Shakespeare Monument by Lord Ronald Gower. The figure of the poet—an idealized portrait based, I believe, on a combination of the supposed likenesses of Shake-

peare—is seated with pen and paper in hand, as in the act of composition. At the base are striking figures of Lady Macbeth, Hamlet, Henry the Fifth as Prince, and Falstaff, representing four aspects of the dramatist's work—tragedy, philosophy, history, and comedy.

On the farther side of the Memorial are the larger pleasantly laid-out Bankcroft or Bancroft Gardens—a public pleasance bordered by the Avon. Here again we come back to the neighbourhood of the Clopton Bridge, from the farther side of which a footpath may be followed along the riverside past the Memorial and Church. The view of the latter is particularly beautiful from the left bank of the stream, and beyond the tall upstanding red mill we reach a footbridge, by which the path crosses to the right bank. Before passing over it, a short and attractive bit of the left bank may be followed to the bathing-places; but visitors should be reminded that there is no outlet at the farther end. The willows here along the bank bring irresistibly to mind the lines about Ophelia's fate—

There is a willow grows aslant a brook  
That shows his hoar leaves in the glassy stream—

and one finds it difficult to avoid wondering as to whether some actual tree may not have been in

the poet's mind when he wrote the impressively simple passage.

Leaving the Avon by a cross-field path to the left, under the railway bridge, we may reach the wooded hill known as Weir Brake, a really beautiful woodland bit—perhaps the most beautiful within a short distance of the town. The somewhat steep hill-side is thickly clothed with trees right down to the river's edge, and here and in the meadows around are to be seen the familiar flowers made newly dear to us by Shakespeare's words—"the daisy pied and violet blue", "the lady's smock all silver white".

Beautiful as is the country all around, it has an added fascination for us as forming the surroundings, in growth and maturity, of the greatest poet the world has ever known, for as a distinguished Dutch critic put it:

Shakespeare penetrated deep into the book of Nature in his native place. Not only was his æsthetic sense captivated by the beauties of the surrounding landscape: not only did he retain all that presented itself before him as a harmonious whole, so that we find repeatedly in his works recollections of his home, of the Avon, gently winding its way through green meadows, dark woodland, pretty orchards: he also learned to observe every detail of this picture; every flower, every plant, every animal, aroused his interest; he grew intimately acquainted with everything about him. Here was developed and brought into active play the poet's sympathy; here, also, was laid the foundation of that extensive knowledge of Nature of which his words bear



STRATFORD-ON-AVON FROM THE MEMORIAL THEATRE



proof, and which commands the wonder and admiration of the botanist, the zoologist, the physiologist, and leads them to conjecture that Shakespeare must have devoted himself to a special study of each of these branches of science.

Happily the season of the annual Shakespeare Festival, the season when the largest number of visitors flock into the town, drawn by the magical name, the season associated with his birth and his death, is the beautiful spring month in which the wooded hills and valleys of Warwickshire are looking their best:

When proud pied April dressed in all his trim  
Hath put a spirit of youth in everything.

## THE NEIGHBOURHOOD

Avon's winding stream,  
By Warwick entertains the high complexioned Leam:  
And as she thence along to Stratford on doth strain,  
Receiveth little Heil the next into her train:  
Then taketh in the Stour, the brook of all the rest  
Which that most goodly Vale of Red Horse loveth best;  
A valley that enjoys a very great estate  
Yet not so famous held as smaller, by her fate.

—*Michael Drayton.*

Drayton — fellow Warwickshireman, fellow poet, and immediate contemporary of Shakespeare — has in his “Polyolbion” given us various bits about his native county, and in the passage above he indicates something of the charm of the country around Stratford-upon-Avon. That country there are few visitors drawn to Stratford by Shakespeare’s magic but will want to visit, now drawn by the beauty of stream and woodland, and now by direct or traditional association with the poet; and here it may be said that traditional most of the associations are, for the ascertained facts of Shakespeare’s life are remarkably few. Mark Twain, in accentuating this fact, has said that “about him you can find out *nothing*”; indeed, playing with the Baconian foolish-

ness, he goes on to say that we cannot say definitely that Shakespeare wrote anything at all beyond the lines on his tombstone beginning, "Good frend for Iesus sake forbeare". How he satisfied himself that that mortuary jingle was written by Shakespeare, the humorist does not tell us. The facts ascertainable beyond dispute are few, but for many people the traditions are as fascinating as facts, and those traditions will long send visitors to the outlying villages associated with the young poet's convivial exploits, to the noble mansion the owner of which he is supposed to have flouted, to the park the deer of which he is said to have poached, to the village from which his wife is supposed to have come, the other village where his mother lived as a girl, or that other whence his family is supposed to have derived. Much destructive criticism has been directed against all the traditions here indicated, yet such criticism can have but little meaning except for the few; and until it can establish beyond all question that Shakespeare did not break into Sir Thomas Lucy's park and kill his worship's deer, until it has been proved that Richard Hathaway of Shuttery never had a daughter named Anne, until it has been shown that Shakespeare never did take part in convivial doings at a village seven miles west of Stratford, Charlecote, Shuttery, and Bidford will

continue to claim some proportion of the attention of visitors to the poet's birthplace.

Indeed, if we had not the fascination of varied traditions, it might be said to be almost necessary to a proper understanding of Shakespeare's native town that we should see something of the surrounding villages and other places which must have been familiar to him, even if not linked with him precisely in the ways indicated by the legends. That those legends give an added interest is indubitable, but without them there are almost innumerable villages and hamlets, mansions and historic spots, within a radius of a dozen miles of Stratford. Some of these have their place in Shakespeare's story, some in the wider traditions of the past, while others have been the meeting-places of opposing forces during critical periods in the country's history. To indicate but some of them, there is Edgehill to the south-east, and Evesham to the south-west—battlefields both; there are Warwick, Kenilworth, and Leamington, forming an irregular triangle to the north-east, while we have to extend our radius but a few miles to bring in Coventry and Banbury, Worcester and Birmingham, and so reach towns of ancient and modern importance.

The country in which we find ourselves, with its tree-grown roads, its pleasant valleys watered by

the streams mentioned by Drayton in the passage quoted at the head of this chapter, its beautiful verdurous meadows, and its abundance of woodland, affords some of the most beautiful of rustic ways. For those who like to walk with an objective there are, as has been said, wellnigh innumerable points of interest for which to make, while those who like rather to saunter wherever inviting footpaths lead, there is the surety of happening now upon comfortable old farms, now upon quaint old cottages and flowerful gardens. The beauty of this country is well indicated in a story which I remember reading somewhere. It ran that in an after-dinner conversation on beautiful scenery two gentlemen made a bet each that he would name the most lovely drive in England. Many people were present, and it was arranged that each of the contestants should write down the name of the scene he had in mind. They did so. One had written on his piece of paper, "The road from Warwick to Coventry", while the other had written, "The road from Coventry to Warwick"! Without going so far afield—and Warwick is but eight miles from Stratford—the sojourner in Shakespeare's town will find much that is beautiful within easy reach. Here the places chiefly to be noted are those associated with the memory of Shakespeare and his family, and most pilgrims—certainly those of a sentimental

turn of mind — will go first to a little scattered hamlet a mile to the west, almost linked up to the town itself with small modern villas.

But if Stratford has almost reached out to Shottery, the visitor may yet hear the plover's call, may yet hear the lark singing overhead, (even as I have, during the first week in January,) in the fields between the two places, as the youth Shakespeare must have heard them many a time when going a-courting to the pretty timbered house on the farther side of the Shottery Brook.

Pleasant footpath ways to Shottery may be taken across the fields from Back Lane or from the Alcester Road near the railway station, or the road may be followed from the level crossing. As we approach Shottery by the last-named way the place seems to consist largely of farm buildings, old and new, close-neighbouring the road, then come new red-brick cottages, with here and there bits suggestive of the older village, and fingerpost directions are seen pointing to the sentimental centre for which most visitors are bound. Following these we cross the Brook by a modern bridge, and bearing to the right see a little way down the road the cottage, made familiar by paintings, sketches, and photographs innumerable. The quaintly thatched, irregular, timbered house is at right angles to the road, with



ANNE HATHAWAY'S COTTAGE, STRATFORD-ON-AVON



immediately in front of it the end of an ugly row of brick cottages standing back somewhat from the road. The home of Anne Hathaway is, however, that which we come to see, and the objection of modernized surroundings may easily be carried too far, though it is not possible to avoid regretting that the immediate neighbourhood should have been permitted to become so inharmonious. Anne Hathaway's house, like the play, is "the thing", and in spring and summer, with its borders abloom with old-fashioned favourites in the way of flowers, we have to forget the row of cottages, the somewhat too obvious attempt on the part of local children and others to exploit a sixteenth-century romance for twentieth-century pence, and to try and picture for ourselves the old place as it was in the days when young Shakespeare was wooing. Of the romance by which the young poet, not yet of legal age, married a woman eight years his senior, we have nothing but conjecture. It is indeed curious that in the will of Richard Hathaway there is no mention of Anne—though it is suggested that the "Agnes" there referred to is only a variant of "Anne"—a fact which has led to the surmise that Shakespeare's wife was not the daughter of the Shottery yeoman at all, but belonged to another family of Hathaways. Tradition has, however, ever persistently associated

Shakespeare's bride with Shottery, and the cottage is alive at this day to testify. As with the birth-place, so with the Hathaway cottage, there is no link wanting from the time that it was in the possession of Richard Hathaway in 1582 up to the time when it was acquired for the public just three hundred and ten years later.

The beautiful old place, well preserved and looked after, is a good type of the Tudor farmhouse, so that quite apart from its story it would be sure to attract attention. Now belonging to the Birthplace Trustees, and so preserved to the public, the cottage is open to visitors, who in the small rooms, with their specimens of old-time furniture, may realize something of what the house was like in which Shakespeare found his bride, and may well regret that no portrait of the fair Anne has come down to us. It has been suggested that beautiful she must have been, and young-looking for her age, to have captivated the heart of one some eight years her junior. But as to what she was like in feature and in character we can only conjecture; of one thing only can we be sure, and that is, that "to steal men's hearts Ann hath a way", as an older writer ingeniously expressed it.

Wilmcote is the next outlying village to which the attention is, as it were, instinctively drawn as

soon as the visitor realizes that it was from that place came Mary Arden, another yeoman's daughter made immortal by her relationship with William Shakespeare. Wilmcote lies about three miles to the north-west of Stratford, and may be reached by railway (the line runs roughly parallel with the canal); but the pilgrim who would know Shakespeare's country would be better advised to keep to the roads, lanes, and cross-country paths—and to get to Wilmcote there is a choice of routes. There is the towing-path; the Birmingham Road, turning from which, two and a half miles from the town, Wilmcote is about a mile to the west; or following the Alcester road we turn to the right about a mile and a half from the town, and lengthening our journey somewhat may visit Billesley first, and thence follow attractive footpaths to Wilmcote.

Here we have a typical Warwickshire village, the special centre of attraction of which is the old red-tiled and gabled farmhouse tradition has long pointed out as the home of Mary Arden. This comfortable-looking old English home would in any case attract the attention of the passer-by, but the fact that it was, according to general belief, the home of Shakespeare's mother, greatly increases its interest. Mary Arden's father, Robert Arden, appears to have been a man of ample means. One of his tenants was

Richard Shakespeare of the neighbouring village of Snitterfield; this Richard Shakespeare's son John (it is believed in 1557 at the church of Aston Cantlow) married Robert Arden's daughter Mary, and the couple set up house in Henley Street, Stratford, where their son was born in 1564. The world-poet was thus born on both sides of yeoman stock, though when a grant of arms was made the Shakespeares were said to be of gentle ancestry, and the Ardens descended from one of the most noble of Warwickshire families. The latter fact may have been in the poet's mind when he wrote of the Forest of Arden. The very name of Arden, according to a seventeenth-century Stratford vicar, "signifies a woody place, and was so used by the Gaels and old Britons". The last of the Ardens, according to the same writer, died at Oxford unmarried in 1643. The name of Henley-in-Arden, about five miles north of Wilmcote, would thus commemorate the ancient days when Warwickshire was for the most part covered with forest. Four or five miles to the west of Wilmcote by by-roads we may visit Snitterfield, where Shakespeare's father lived until his marriage, and where his brother continued to farm with, it is said, diminishing success, while the poet was making undying fame and a competent fortune in London.



MARY ARDEN'S HOUSE, STRATFORD-ON-AVON



If there are certain villages in this favoured neighbourhood associated actually and traditionally with the dominating personality of the poet, there are all around many others which must have been familiar to Shakespeare, and may be regarded as delightful points towards which to direct our steps, or as pleasant incidents in longer pedestrian excursions through the leafy county. Here, however, it is those more or less directly connected with Shakespeare in which we are interested, and turning to the west and south-west of Stratford there are a number of places associated in the following quatrain which is supposed to have been extemporized by Shakespeare himself:—

Piping Pebworth, dancing Marston,  
Haunted Hillborough, and hungry Grafton,  
With dodging Exhall, papist Wixford,  
Beggary Broom, and drunken Bidford.

A similar jingle about another group of villages on the Gloucestershire border not far from Stratford has also been assigned by local tradition to Shakespeare:—

Dirty Gretton, dingy Greet,  
Beggary Winchcomb, Sudely sweet;  
Hartshorn and Wittington Bell,  
Andoverford and Merry Frog Mill.

Excepting the first two mentioned, we here have

a group of villages lying from five to seven miles west of Stratford, and each and all are supposed to have been noted centres of conviviality in the days of Shakespeare's youth, where the poet himself is said to have borne his part in competitive carousals. "Drunken Bidford" may be said to be the village most intimately associated with Shakespeare, for the story runs that, having gone with boon companions over to that village on a drinking bout, the poet was so overcome by the strength of the Bidford ale, that he had only proceeded a mile or so on his homeward journey, when he and his friends lay down to rest by the wayside beneath the shade of a crabapple-tree, and there they lay till morning. On awakening Shakespeare was asked to return and continue the contest, but declined, saying that he had already drunk with the villages named and stigmatized in the four lines which he is supposed to have improvised. The legend, wholly apocryphal, has been made the basis of a pretty idea set forth in the following verses by Douglas Jerrold:—

To Shakespeare's mighty line  
Let's drink with heart and soul;  
'T will give a zest divine,  
Though humble be the bowl.  
Then drink while I essay,  
In slipshod, careless rhyme,  
A legendary lay  
Of Willy's golden time.

One balmy summer's night,  
As Stratford yeomen tell,  
Our Will, the royst'ring wight,  
Beneath a crab tree fell;  
And, sunk in deep repose,  
The tipsy time beguiled,  
Till Dan Apollo rose  
Upon his greatest child.

Since then all people vowed  
The tree had wondrous power:  
With sense, with speech endowed,  
'T would prattle by the hour;  
Though scattered far about,  
Its remnants still would blab:  
Mind, ere this fact you doubt,—  
It was a female crab.

"I felt," thus spoke the tree,  
"As down the poet lay,  
A touch, a thrill, a glee,  
Ne'er felt before that day.  
Along my verdant blood  
A quick'ning sense did shoot,  
Expanding every bud,  
And rip'ning all my fruit.

"What sounds did move the air,  
Around me and above!  
The yell of mad despair,  
The burning sigh of love!  
Ambition, guilt-possessed,  
Suspicion on the rack,  
The ringing laugh and jest,  
Begot by sherris-sack!

## SHAKESPEARE-LAND

"Since then, my branches full  
Of Shakespeare's vital heat,  
My fruit, once crude and dull  
Became as honey sweet;  
And when, o'er plain and hill,  
Each tree was leafless seen,  
My boughs did flourish still  
In everlasting green."

And thus our moral food  
Doth Shakespeare leaven still,  
Enriching all the good  
And less'ning all the ill;—  
Thus, by his bounty shed  
Like balm from angel's wing,  
Though winter scathe our head,  
Our spirits dance with spring.

The crab tree is supposed to have remained standing until 1824. Within about a mile of Bidford, on the south side of the road, the spot is pointed out, and even on the Ordnance Survey maps "Shakespeare's Crab" is duly marked.

Anyone who would visit these places will find all the eight villages at which, we are asked to believe, Shakespeare took part in drinking bouts, within seven miles of Stratford, and all can be reached, by those who are not good pedestrians, by rail. Those fond of walking will find the byways more attractive than the railway. "Dancing Marston" and "piping Pebworth", which are both in Gloucestershire, may be reached by the Honeybourne railway, and even those who are but indifferent walkers will find the



"DRUNKEN BIDFORD"



other six all within easy reach of the "East and West" line from Stratford to Broom. Those who would go to the half-dozen villages about "drunken Bidford" would be well advised to walk there, partly by the Avon side and partly by the road along which the convivial roysterers journeyed. The footpath along the right bank of the river is beautiful all the way from near Stratford Mill to Luddington, with its flowerful meadows and hedgerows, its reeds and backwater weeds along the river. Following the windings of the stream, the journey is something under three miles, but within that distance the scenery is greatly varied with flat meadows on our right, and for part of the way on the opposite side the Weir Brake, densely wooded from the water's edge to the top of the hill. Along the bank on our own side the most noticeable feature is the many beautiful hawthorns, forming a wonderful sight in the sweet season of the year. After passing under the railway bridge about halfway, the bank rises on one side of the river, and has fallen away on the farther one, where through the flat fluvial meadows we see the winding Stour, bordered by large pollarded willows as it flows into the Avon. Hawthorns still mark our way between the footpath and the water until we near Luddington, a village almost hidden from view. Two or three houses

show on the high ground on our right before the path takes us through close-grown willows near to the stream, otherwise we might pass the village without being aware of it. Following the pathway up the bank, however, we find ourselves close to the little evergreen-surrounded church of Luddington. A discredited tradition says that it was at an earlier edifice here that William Shakespeare and Anne Hathaway were married; but the tradition is said to have originated in the nineteenth century, and to be entirely unsupported. The village has no special attraction beyond the fact that it is situated on a beautiful reach of the river. Following the road a short distance through it we come to two grand wayside elms, at the foot of which some appreciative person has put a rustic bench. It is a well-chosen position, as from it is to be had a glorious and extensive view across the rich valley of the Avon, with its farm lands and its fine diversity of woodland. At Luddington the river may be crossed by boat, and a left-bank footpath followed across the Avon and Stour meadows, or the road may be continued past the two view-commanding elms and over the railway out on to the Evesham road, reaching which Binton Church shows among the trees ahead of us on the right. When we are near Binton Station, with the hillside on our right, close grown

with orchards, a forking road to the left invites us by the "Five Alls" to Welford-on-Avon, and one of the most beautiful bits of the beautiful river. Through Welford the road that goes roughly parallel with the stream along the southern side of it is a somewhat longer but more attractive way of reaching "drunken Bidford"; from the hamlet of Barton the last half-mile or so is by footpath close to the Avon. This route gives us a far pleasanter view of Bidford as we approach it, with its grey-towered church and its grand old bridge spanning the river. It is a neat and comfortable-looking village, though, as we cross the bridge, the brewery and inn remind us of the libellous epithet which legend has attached to it. To see where "Shakespeare's Crab" stood about three-quarters of a mile on the Stratford side, we must enter the village by the main road, and then as we do so some old deserted grass-grown cottages having a very "drunken" appearance, but close-neighbourd by neat and unpicturesque modern cottages, may perhaps be taken as together typifying the legend of ancient dissipation and the actuality of to-day. A further story associating Bidford with Shakespeare is to the effect that here was held a convivial meeting that had its share in cutting short the great poet's career. It is recorded thus in the diary of John Ward, vicar of Stratford-upon-Avon (1648-79): "Shakespeare,

Drayton, and Ben Jonson, had a merie meeting, and itt seems drank too hard, for Shakespeare died of a feavour there contracted". There is, it should be added, no evidence in support of the statement, that this "merie meeting" was at Bidford.

"Beggarly Broom" and "papist Wixford" are scattered villages lying near the banks of Avon's tributary Arrow, a little to the north of Bidford, and though they have no direct association with Shakespeare, the apocryphal verse connecting them with his name marks them and their neighbours from among the innumerable villages which will be found offering picturesqueness and quiet to the visitor. From the flat meadows east of Broom I have seen a flock of probably a thousand plovers rise and pass hither and thither, as though looking out for the danger that had disturbed them: east and west, north and south, the flock passed on swift wings, the sound of which reached my ears as a low susurrations, so swift that they had diminished almost to nothing successively in each direction and were back directly overhead. I felt like the old woman in Mr. Alfred Noyes' wonderful poem of "The Tramp Transfigured"—"Inch and 'arf an inch she went, but never gained a yard"—so short a distance had I journeyed while the birds had journeyed so far.

"Dodging Exhall" is a mile from Wixford, whence



"BEGGARLY BROOM"



its roofs may be seen among trees on the rising ground, and "hungry Grafton", or Temple Grafton, a mile and a half yet farther away in this leafy and hilly district. To visit the hamlet of "Haunted Hillborough" (why it is haunted I have been unable to ascertain, possibly merely for the sake of alliteration) the Evesham road should be left at the top of the rise beyond Binton Station, and the footpath followed through the Avonside meadows. There are villages and hamlets wellnigh innumerable that may be visited in Shakespeare's country, but here I have little space to do more than indicate those of them which have real or legendary associations with William Shakespeare.

Except in three of the historical plays, wherein scenes were laid in Coventry, Kenilworth, and Warwick, Shakespeare did not much identify places within easy reach of Stratford with his plays. The two exceptions will be found in *As You Like It*, with its Forest of Arden, and in the introduction to *The Taming of the Shrew*. Who does not recall Christopher Sly, when the befooling of him into believing himself a noble lord who has long been distraught begins:

"What, would you make me mad? Am not I Christopher Sly, old Sly's son of Benton Heath, by birth a Pedlar, by education a cardmaker, by transmutation a bear-herd, and now by present

profession a tinker? Ask Marian Hacket, the fat ale-wife of Wincot, if she know me not; if she say I am not fourteen-pence on the score for sheer ale, score me up for the lyingest knave in Christendom."

"Mary Hacket, the fat ale-wife of Wincot", has naturally excited the curiosity of annotators, for the words suggest actuality rather than an invention of the dramatist. Now Wilmcote (said sometimes to have been pronounced Wincot), where Shakespeare's mother lived, has by some, on merest conjecture, been considered Christopher Sly's haunt. South of Stratford, about four miles between Clifford and Quinton, there lies, in the latter parish, a tiny hamlet actually known as Wincot; and what is more, as Mr. Sidney Lee tells us in his *Life of Shakespeare*, on November 21, 1591, there was baptized in Quinton Church a "Sara Hacket, the daughter of Robert Hacket". This looks fairly conclusive, but the poet may have had a "composite" Wincot in his mind, taking the name of Hacket from the one and giving it to the ale-wife of the other; for the earliest identification of the scene of Sly's drinking bout was with Wilnecote, near Tamworth. A Warwickshire poet of the seventeenth century addressed to a friend resident at that place lines beginning—

*Shakespeare* your *Wincot* ale hath much renowned,  
That foxed a Beggar so (by chance was found

Sleeping) that there needed not many a word  
To make him believe he was a lord.

Later on the writer made his reference yet more direct by saying that he will visit "Wincot" (Wilne-cote) and drink

Such ale as Shakespeare fancies  
Did put Kit Sly into such lordly trances.

In Mr. Lee's biography of Shakespeare other instances are given in which it is shown that the dramatist used in the dialogue of his plays names of people and places familiar to him as a Stratfordian. A delightful example is in the talk between Justice Shallow and his man Davy:

*Shallow.* About thy business, Davy.

*Davy.* I beseech you, sir, to countenance William Visor of Woncot against Clement Perkes o' the hill.

*Shallow.* There is many complaints, Davy, against that Visor: that Visor is an arrant knave on my knowledge.

*Davy.* I grant your worship that he is a knave, sir, but yet, God forbid, sir, but a knave should have some countenance at his friend's request. An honest man, sir, is able to speak for himself, when a knave is not. I have served your worship truly, sir, this eight years; and if I cannot once or twice in a quarter bear out a knave against an honest man, I have but a very little credit with your worship. The knave is mine honest friend, sir; therefore, I beseech your worship, let him be countenanced.

*Shallow.* Go to; I say he shall have no wrong.

It adds, if possible, to the humour of the scene, that on learning that the references here are to

places in or near Stratford, we may also believe that in presenting the self-important Justice and his naive man, Shakespeare was thinking of actual persons, even if we do not accept Shallow as a satire on Sir Thomas Lucy. It is true that the case of "William Visor of Woncot against Clement Perkes o' the hill" concerned people and places some distance away in the neighbouring county of Gloucester, but we learn that Woodmancote there has long been known, locally and colloquially, as Woncot, that a family of Visor or Vizard is associated with it, and that "The Hill" is the local name for Stinchcombe Hill, known in Shakespeare's time to have been the home of a family named Perkes.

This interest lies, however, some distance from Stratford to the south-west, while about four miles away to the east of the town is a place of which all who have but the slightest knowledge of the legendary lore of Shakespeare must have heard. This is the place where tradition—one of the amplest traditions about him that we have—says that Shakespeare indulged in deer-stealing, with results of which neither he nor the aggrieved Sir Thomas Lucy could ever have dreamed. This, in a word, is the fine Tudor mansion of Charlecote, with its broad surrounding park. The tradition which declares that Shakespeare and his associates broke into Charlecote



"PAPIST WIXFORD"



Park and killed Sir Thomas's deer is one of the "legends" that can be traced back nearest to his time. It was mentioned in the late part of the seventeenth century, and such mention is almost too early to allow of our believing that the legend was devised to agree with a famous passage in the opening scene of *The Merry Wives of Windsor*. There we have references which, if they do not establish that "Robert Shallow, esquire", who wrote himself "'Armigero', in any bill, warrant, quittance, or obligation", was meant for Sir Thomas Lucy, they certainly do seem to show that Shakespeare had Lucy in mind at the time of writing. Mrs. Charlotte Carmichael Stopes contends, it may be pointed out, that Shallow was *not* intended for Sir Thomas Lucy, despite the evidence. Her arguments are well stated in that excellent work, *Shakespeare's Warwickshire Contemporaries*. A remarkable fact to which attention is drawn in the same book is that Sir Thomas had evidently a company of actors, for there was found in the Coventry Town accounts an entry for 1584 running: "Paid to Sir Thomas Lucie's players xs". This suggests that Shakespeare may have had some acquaintance with actors, perhaps even with acting, before he left Stratford for London.

*Slender.* All his successors before him hath done't; and all

his ancestors that come after him may: they may give the dozen white luces in their coat.

*Shallow.* It is an old coat.

*Evans.* The dozen white luces do become an old coat well; it agrees well, passant; it is a familiar beast to man, and signifies love.

*Shallow.* The luce is the fresh fish; the salt fish is an old coat.

Here we have undoubted reference to the Lucy coat of arms. If we follow the more direct road from Stratford to Charlecote—that by way of Tiddington and its near neighbour, the beautiful village of Alveston—we shall, a little more than three miles after leaving the foot of old Clopton Bridge, come to a stone gateway fronting us, where the road bends sharply towards the right. The gateway arrests the attention at once, and there, sculptured upon its time-worn stone, is seen the arms of three luces (or pike), and we know at once that we are at Charlecote itself. A little beyond the great gateway is a footpath entrance through the curiously old-fashioned rustic paling, the irregular pieces of which are fastened together with wooden pegs, as though such modern innovations as nails and screws were despised.

Following the indefinitely marked footpath across the short turf, we have a broad view of the park, and seeing a number of deer, may well pause and think of the old story which makes out the poet in

early manhood to have been a deer-stealer. Though in Elizabeth's time the punishment for such an offence was three months' imprisonment, and a "vindictive" fine to the amount of three times the damage done, the offence of deer-stealing seems to have been indulged in somewhat freely. The offence may, it is possible, have had for Tudor youth something of the glamour of romance about it, as though it belonged to those half-picturesque forms of wrongdoing in which the adventurous have delighted. In any case, Stratfordians seem to have had a special liking for the unlicensed "sport", for as early as 1280 the Bishop of Worcester sent instructions to the dean of Stratford and Warwick and others solemnly to excommunicate all those that "had broke his park and stole his deer".

The story runs that into this park came a number of young men of Stratford to poach Sir Thomas Lucy's deer, and that the identification of one of them as William Shakespeare led to his leaving his native town to seek his fortune in London. As Lander puts it: "The frolic of Shakespeare in deer-stealing was the cause of his *Hegira*; and his connection with players in London was the cause of his writing plays. Had he remained in his native town, his ambition had never been excited by the applause of the intellectual, the popular, and the powerful."

If that were so, never, surely, was evil done to so good an end. The picturesqueness of the episode has moved writers of the most diverse genius to look upon it as a subject for imaginative treatment. Walter Savage Landor, indeed, added to our literature a beautiful book in *The Citation and Examination of William Shakespeare*, in which the young poet, Sir Thomas, and his chaplain hold long and delightful talk. One of the last works of Dr. Richard Garnett was a most engaging comedy on the theme of *William Shakespeare, Pedagogue and Poacher*. These imaginative additions to the slight legend form interesting and entertaining reading, but must not here detain us. Douglas Jerrold treated the subject in a brief descriptive essay, "Shakespeare at Charlecote Park", in which he shows the poet and his fellows captured and secured in one of the strongest of Charlecote's cellars. Instead of passing the night in fear and trembling, the culprits passed it in jesting and singing, and this was the tenor of their song:—

'Twas yester morning, as I walked adown by Charlecote Meads,  
And counting o'er my wicked sins, as friars count their beads;  
I halted just beside a deer—a deer with speaking face,  
That seem'd to say: "In God's name come and take me from  
this place!"

And then it 'gan to tell its tale—and said its babe forlorn  
Had butcher'd been for Lucy's dish soon after it was born;



THE GATEWAY, CHARLECOTE



"I know 'tis right!" exclaimed the dam, "my child should form  
a feast,

But what I most complain of is, that beast should dine off beast!"

And still the creature mourn'd its fate, and how it came to pass  
That Lucy here a scarecrow is, in London town an ass!<sup>1</sup>

And ended still its sad complaints with offers of its life,  
And twenty hundred times exclaimed, "Oh! haven't you a  
knife?"

There's brawny limbs in Stratford town, there's hearts without  
a fear,

There's tender souls who really have compassion on a deer;  
And last night was without a moon, a night of nights to give  
Fit dying consolation to a deer that may not live.

The dappled brute lay on the grass, a knife was in its side;  
Another from its yearning throat let forth its vital tide.  
It said, as tho' escaping from the worst that could befall,  
"Now, thank my stars, I shall not smoke on board at Charle-  
cote Hall!"

Oh, happy deer! above your friends exalted high by fate,  
You're not condemned like all the herds to Lucy's glutton  
plate;

But every morsel of your flesh, from shoulder to the haunch,  
Tho' bred and killed in Charlecote Park, hath lined an honest  
paunch.

In the morning the culprits had fled: "How they  
effected their escape remaineth to this day a mystery,  
though it cannot be disguised that heavy suspicion  
fell upon four of the maids".

But there are earlier references in verse to this  
escapade in Charlecote Park, for one version of the

<sup>1</sup>"In the country a scarecrow, in London an ass!"—Shakespeare's Satire on Sir Thomas Lucy.

tradition says that Shakespeare, before leaving Stratford for London, wrote a coarse and clumsy lampoon against Sir Thomas Lucy, and fastened it to the park gateway. Much ink has been spilled in discussing the genuineness of a lampoon, of which it may be said, with some confidence, that it is not marked by any single quality that can be regarded as Shakespearean. The deer-stealing episode, however, may be considered as quite likely to have occurred, and is generally accepted as having proved the turning-point in the poet's life. Certainly here in Charlecote Park itself, with its many fine old oaks and elms and other trees, its slightly undulated turf, dotted with deer, it is easy to believe the legend true. We emerge from the park on to the road again, and crossing a tributary of the Avon see Charlecote Church—a modern edifice containing the tombs of Sir Thomas Lucy, whom Shakespeare is supposed to have angered doubly, by stealing his deer, and by satirizing him and his wife. The “tumble-down” stile nearly opposite the church is sure to attract attention, especially if the unwary pedestrian attempt to cross it without having noticed its curious construction.

Following the road, and turning to the left along by the park fence, the small village of Hampton Lucy is reached immediately after crossing the Avon,

with the large mill on our right, and osier beds and overhanging trees on our left. It is a very picturesque stretch of the river that we get here, up by the mill and down where the stream flows along Charlecote Park. Continuing our way by the left road through the village, we can join the Warwick and Stratford high road about two miles from the latter place; but far pleasanter is it to leave the road where it is broadened with a stretch of grass under trees, and following the footpath, to keep close to the right bank of the Avon. This is a really beautiful and varied bit of the river—above which we are sometimes at a considerable height, with a tree-grown bank sloping steeply to the water's edge, while at other times the path takes us down near to the stream. At one point—lovely in flowering time—a large crab tree grows aslant the river. In midwinter I have seen a number of goodly apples growing on it—left there, presumably, rather owing to their inaccessibility than to their sourness. Here we have come along the top of the high bank known as Hatton Rock, and continuing along the path we cross some low-lying fields, coming out on to the main road at Oxstall, about a mile from Stratford, and can congratulate ourselves on having memories of one of the most beautiful of the walks within easy reach of the centre of Shakespeare-land.

In thus pointing out the places near to Stratford that are definitely associated with Shakespeare by somewhat indefinite legends, it is not possible to touch upon the other numerous places with which he must, as boy or man, have been familiar; but no one will stay long in the town without wishing to follow many of the lanes and fieldpaths that may be taken in all directions—along the rivers, over the hills, or to the quiet hamlets and villages to be found about the leafy byways. The railway, too, offers easy access to Warwick, Kenilworth, and Coventry, places rich in story, in which Shakespeare laid several scenes of his historical plays. At Warwick we are shown the “King-maker” taking the crown from Edward the Fourth that he may restore it to Henry the Sixth; at Kenilworth poor Henry the Sixth learns at once of the submission of Jack Cade’s followers, and of the appearance of the Duke of York in arms; at Coventry Edward the Fourth and the “King-maker” meet and set out thence for the Battle of Barnet; and near there Prince Hal meets Falstaff and his ragged company. It was in the lists at Coventry, too, that Bolingbroke and Mowbray were to meet in mortal combat, when Richard the Second stayed the contest and sent the two into “the stranger paths of banishment”. Warwick is eight, Kenilworth twelve, and Coventry about seven-

teen miles from Stratford, and each place would call for separate treatment. It is the more immediate neighbourhood of Stratford that is most fittingly known as Shakespeare-land—the country which must have been familiar to him in all its details, so familiar that the wayside flowers about the roads and fields and in the cottage gardens which he walked have something of a new charm for us, as we think of the epithets which he attached to them, the “pied” daisies, the “cinque-spotted” cowslip, the “silver-white” ladysmock, the “winking” marybuds, the “rathe” primrose, and many more.

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